CHAPTER 1
PURPOSE AND NEED FOR ACTION

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1.1 INTRODUCTION

The United States Army Alaska (USARAK) proposes to construct and to operate a state-of-the-art, fully automated and instrumented combat training facility. This facility will support training that involves the live fire of service ammunition under realistic rural and urban combat conditions for up to 1,000 personnel and 170 combat vehicles per training event using live ammunition ranging from individual soldier weapons (5.56 mm rounds) up to 105 and 120 mm rounds fired from the Stryker Mobile Gun System. This involves the construction and operation of a Battle Area Complex (BAX) and a Combined Arms Collective Training Facility (CACTF) in close proximity to one another to allow for closely integrated training. The BAX requires approximately 3,500 acres and the CACTF requires 800 acres of land suitable for the construction and operation of these ranges. In addition, surface danger zones (SDZ) (which require a range of 7.5 miles) are associated with both the BAX (rural environment) and CACTF (urban environment), and require a combined area of 25,000 acres. The combined size requirement of the proposed combat training facility and SDZ is approximately 30,000 acres. While these ranges can be used separately to train specific skills, their ability to be used together to train combat teams on flexibility and diversity is vital to wartime preparedness. During wartime situations, battles will transition between rural and urban environments. It is necessary to provide a range complex where all of these skills can be practiced in a demanding and realistic environment.

The Army is currently undergoing a major organizational transformation that includes most aspects of the Army's doctrine, training, leader development, organizations, installations, materiel, and Soldiers. As a result, an increase in military activity in Alaska is inevitable. This increase will reflect the type and the level of training that the Army must have as it transforms, and as it prepares to respond to new challenges in support of National Defense (USARAK 2004a). (For additional information, see *Final Environmental Impact Statement for Transformation of U.S. Army Alaska, Vol. 1-2* at http://www.usarak.army.mil/conservation).

In the past five years, use of Alaskan military lands has been significantly less than in previous decades, particularly in the 1970s and 1980s. Recent Operation Tempo (OPTEMPO) (the activity rate at which a command/unit trains and deploys to conduct military operations) has decreased due to the Army's focus on worldwide deployment. Future build-up will focus on homestation training and increased deployment capability. However, the projected OPTEMPO will be less than that experienced by Alaska in the 1970s and 1980s when the majority of the training operations were conducted from October to February, with intermittent range closures to the public occurring during these five months.

USARAK can trace its history back to the Army's arrival, as an occupation force following the purchase of Alaska from Russia in 1867, through its emergence as a modern mechanized force during the mid-1950s. From 1956 through the late 1970s, USARAK was comprised of combat units that consisted of tracked combat vehicles. During this timeframe, the total number of USARAK personnel reached a peak of 15,000 individuals, as compared to the projected peak of approximately 7,900 individuals in 2010 as a result of the current USARAK transformation (USARAK 2004a).

1.2 PURPOSE AND NEED FOR ACTION

USARAK requires a training facility in Alaska that allows its assigned military units, other Army units, and other Department of Defense (DoD) services to conduct live-fire combat training that will raise and sustain their war-fighting skills to higher levels than can be achieved using current facilities. These combat skills must be raised to levels required for military units to effectively conduct operations in the current Global War on Terrorism, to support other world-wide contingency operations, and to be prepared for future global combat operations. The design of Army training facilities such as the BAX and CACTF has taken into account the nature of modern warfare and its increased emphasis on realistic training for combat.

The purpose of the proposed action is to provide year-round, fully automated, comprehensive, and realistic training and range facilities, which, in combination, would support company (200 Soldiers) through battalion (800 Soldiers) combat team training events. Current training facilities do not provide the same high level of training realism and effectiveness required to sustain the requisite high level of combat readiness for USARAK Soldiers.

The proposed action involves the construction and operation of a co-located BAX and CACTF necessary to support these required higher levels of realistic training in both urban and rural environments. These facilities will incorporate state-of-the-art technology to support all phases of training, from ground maneuver and target engagements to the After Action Review (AAR) (training feedback) phase.

The Army is obligated to ensure that Soldiers go into battle with the best possible assurance of success and survival. Rigorous and realistic training on facilities such as the BAX and CACTF, conducted to standard, will fulfill this obligation. The BAX and CACTF are required to fully train Soldiers for war by maintaining unit readiness and availability in recognition of the threats facing our nation and the world today. An Army fighting force that emphasizes training first and foremost will be a much more capable response force when alerted for action at their homestation. This higher level of training readiness will support the more rapid deployment of USARAK combat forces to a particular area of operation.

The BAX would support company-sized (200 Soldiers) mounted (using training vehicles) and dismounted (training on foot) live-fire operations on a fully automated, collective live-fire range. The BAX is primarily designed for offensive operations using support vehicles. The range would utilize an automated counter-attacking force, requiring a unit to quickly transition to defensive operations. The unit may also conduct Joint operations allowing training exercises or operations with other Department of Defense organizations.

The CACTF would support battalion-sized (800 Soldiers) force-on-force training using blank ammunition, Short Range Training Ammunition (SRTA) rounds, and simulated munitions in an urban environment. This training facility would support the combat team and train them “as they will fight” using the skills required for effective building-to-building fighting on today’s battlefield.

1.2.1 Army Training Overview

Army training doctrine requires practice of combined arms teamwork (infantry, artillery and aviation in a cooperative effort) and synchronization to prepare units for such wartime operations. Combined arms proficiency is obtained from the regular practice of combat missions and tasks in

a realistic situation. This process starts with the development of individual skills, which, when combined and practiced, build unit proficiency, from crew level (two Soldiers) through brigade task force (3,000 to 5,000 Soldiers). These units train to standard, based on the requirements of a precise and specific mission; and, in the process, they develop a foundation of combat skills. These skills are continually refined, based on the requirements of subsequent training missions.

Generally, Army units follow a standard hierarchy. The smallest unit is the individual Soldier. Soldiers are grouped together into squads that normally consist of nine to eleven personnel. Usually, three squads are grouped together into a platoon, and three platoons make up a company. In turn, three companies comprise a battalion, and three battalions are grouped into a brigade. The proposed BAX would support company (and smaller) combat teams, and the proposed CACTF would support battalion (and smaller) combat teams. Certain Army vehicles and weapons systems have assigned crews of two to four Soldiers with specific responsibilities for the correct and effective use of their assigned combat system (i.e., a Stryker with mounted weapons, mortars, or machine guns). A certain number of vehicles are assigned to each unit.

Army training progresses from institution (initial entry training conducted immediately after the Soldier enlists) to the Soldier's first duty assignment in the field, and includes individual Soldier training through larger unit collective training. Collective training is any exercise that requires more than one Soldier to complete. During the individual and crew phases, weapon and vehicle crews become proficient in the operation and tactics of the weapon and/or vehicle as a system. The squad phase is the initial phase of collective training, allowing squads to train together to become proficient in the collective squad tasks. The platoon phase is the intermediate level of collective training. Platoons become proficient in the platoon level tasks. As the company-sized unit becomes proficient in assigned tasks, it represents the penultimate level of collective training.

Effective, realistic training is the cornerstone of operational success. The performance of critical tasks, at the level of individuals, crews, platoons and companies, is dependent on the availability and capability of live-fire ranges and maneuver areas. While the continued improvement of live-fire ranges and facilities has historically enabled development of required "go-to-war" skills, these live-fire ranges and facilities will become even more important in the future, as the units must be able to deploy into a combat zone and be operational within 96 hours.

Army training ranges enable the development and improvement of Soldier and team proficiency and competence in the use of sophisticated weaponry. These ranges provide individual Soldier proficiency and collective training; realistically portraying combat conditions, and molding the team into an effective fighting unit.

The Department of the Army issued a Record of Decision (ROD) to transform USARAK forces to help meet the Nation's security requirements of the 21st Century. Towards this purpose, the 172nd Infantry Brigade (Separate) (172nd SIB) at Forts Wainwright (FWA) and Richardson (FRA), Alaska, began transformation into a Stryker Brigade Combat Team (SBCT), and the 1-501st Parachute Infantry Regiment (PIR) began expanding to an Airborne Task Force in June 2004. The 172nd SIB and 1-501st PIR are presently stationed at FWA and FRA, with additional major training facilities at Donnelly Training Area (DTA) (formerly Fort Greely). USARAK's transformation is a necessary step to fill a current shortfall as the Army develops its future force and combat systems over the next 30 years. Various activities on USARAK's military training lands would be altered to provide a baseline capability and foundation to support Army transformation requirements.

Units assigned to USARAK are no longer confined to a specific regional area (i.e., the Pacific region), but are now an integral part of a worldwide deployable force. USARAK has been designated as a home installation for a Stryker Brigade Combat Team (SBCT) with the means to rapidly deploy in response to Army force requirements. Once in theater, the SBCT has the mobility to rapidly redeploy within the operational area, and move to critical battlefield locations with sufficient force to execute and sustain its assigned missions.

1.2.2 Training Objectives

Army training teaches, sustains, and maintains individual and collective skills. Ranges and training areas are grouped progressively by level of training: from individual Soldier qualification skills, through integrated live-fire and maneuver unit training, to large-scale force-on-force exercises using training weapons. The proposed range project would accommodate these training requirements on co-located ranges designed in accordance with the standards set out in the Army's Training Circular (TC) 25-8, *Training Ranges* (Table 1.a). In order to offer a minimum of 242 days for available training, the USARAK Range Development Program and the Army's TC 25-1, *Training Land* require ranges to be designed and constructed so as to offer a year-round training opportunity. This year-round capability will necessitate closure of these ranges to the public when they are in use or undergoing maintenance. Closure will also be necessary to accommodate employee holidays and unforeseen events.

Table 1.a Training Objectives and Definition of Terms

Training Objectives from TC 25-8, *Training Ranges*	**Training Objective Definition**
1. Provide multi-echelon training in a combined arms element allowing joint training opportunities.	Different units (e.g., infantry, aviation, engineers, etc.) working and training together as a group. Training exercises or operations can also be conducted with multiple services. An example of a "joint operation" would be Army ground forces supported by Air Force fixed-wing assets.
2. Provide multi-echelon task-organized situations.	Units focus on individual requirements while training as a group.
3. Provide multi-echelon situations across the full spectrum of warfare.	Describes the countless situations Soldiers can encounter in battle.
4. Support battle-focused training by allowing units to train as a joint combined arms team.	Different units (e.g., infantry, aviation, engineers, etc.) working and training together as a group. Training exercises or operations can also be conducted with multiple military services.
5. Support battle-focused training by allowing units to train for combat proficiency (realistic conditions and performance orientation).	Units can train in situations similar to what they would encounter in battle, including operation of vehicles while engaging targets and firing of weapons with other Soldiers.
6. Allow units to train to standard.	Units can train on all of their skills and prove that they are proficient (received the required score or met all the training objectives).
7. Allow units to adapt.	Different training scenarios, particularly vehicle training lanes, are developed to provide situational variety and force Soldiers to adapt

	to change.
8. Support battle-focused training by allowing units to maintain and sustain.	Soldiers need to continually practice their skills to maintain proficiency.
9. Support battle-focused training by allowing units to use multi-echelon techniques.	Used to train Soldiers how to fight as a group. Following training as a squad, Soldiers train as a platoon, then as a company, and finally as a battalion.
10. Allow units to sustain proficiency.	Soldiers need to continually practice their skills to maintain proficiency.
11. Allow units to develop leadership.	Ranges allow leaders to practice their skills.
12. Provide mounted and dismounted operations.	Units train in both mounted (in a vehicle) and dismounted (out of a vehicle) operations and engage targets either way.
13. Maximize training efficiencies and synergies.	Close siting of individual ranges to allow for simultaneous or independent training events on both facilities.
14. Provide realistic training.	These facilities can be used either independently or in a combined scenario. These facilities enable combat teams to train in rural (BAX) or urban (CACTF) settings either independently, combined, or in transition from one to the other.

Current training and USARAK Commanding General guidance requires smaller unit training (platoon and below) be conducted as close to its homestation as possible, and large unit training (company and above) be conducted within DTA. USARAK units currently follow a "crawl-walk-run" strategy. During the "crawl" stage, classroom-oriented activities are conducted at the homestation to familiarize the units with the training mission. The "walk" stage involves deployment to the field and an on-the-ground survey of the training facility prior to conducting the training mission. Blank ammunition and Multiple Integrated Laser Engagement Systems (MILES) equipment may be used at this stage. During the "walk" stage, the squad and platoon level live-fire may be conducted as the building block for the company level live-fire on the BAX. During the final "run" stage, the entire training mission is executed, live-fire munitions are used, and Soldier performance is evaluated. Each Unit Commander determines the level and type of training required by the unit to achieve its training mission at each stage.

1.2.3 Range Design Criteria

These criteria are based on range design standards set forth in TC 25-8. These standards allow for the most comprehensive level of training for Soldiers in a collective training environment, as set forth by the Army in Field Manual (FM) 7-0, *Training the Force*. In addition, these standards provide units with the greatest flexibility in training scenarios, while still meeting current requirements.

1.2.3.1 Battle Area Complex

USARAK cannot currently provide tenant and visiting units with a fully automated and standardized range for live-fire training for company-level combat teams or other combat units. In addition, units stationed in Alaska must currently travel out of state to develop and execute required larger unit training scenarios with mission essential equipment and train on large,

complex live-fire ranges. This requires excessive personnel and time commitments (for both Range Control and training units). Current training opportunities meet only minimal standards.

As part of the proposed action, the BAX would provide company-level (200 Soldiers or less) combat teams (and other combat units) the opportunity for training and other required qualifications in both mounted (by vehicle) and dismounted (by foot) operations. Combat teams need to train and test their skills (the ability to detect, identify, engage, and defeat stationary and moving targets) in a tactical situation. Soldiers must train on a standardized range, designed in accordance with TC 25-8, in order to meet the established level of proficiency in their wartime missions (in accordance with FM 7-0) (Chapter 2, Figure 2.a). BAX design requirements include the following:

- Maximum scenario flexibility and maneuver space to allow Soldiers to "train as they will fight" in battle. These flexibilities include: topographical variation, variation in vegetative overhead protection, adequate line of sight, maximum distance between Soldier and target, safety, and live-fire capability, with sufficient space to ensure all SDZs are within installation boundaries. SDZs are specified areas where the effects of weapons firing are safely contained during live-fire exercises.
- Capability to train under realistic scenarios for 200 (or fewer) Soldiers.
- Capability to stage preliminary and concurrent training for battalion (and below) combat teams.
- Capability to incorporate all Battlefield Operating Systems (BOS). BOS include those units and their associated equipment that participate in combat operations, logistically support the participating units, and/or conduct additional critical activities such as intelligence gathering and distribution.
- Approximately 3,500 acres of predominantly upland area suitable for range infrastructure (footprint) and operation.
- SDZ that accommodates all weapon distance requirements up to approximately seven miles in accordance with Department of Army (DA) Pamphlet (PAM) 385-63, *Range Safety,* and Army Regulation (AR) 210-21, *Army Ranges and Training Land Programs*.
- Full automation with computer-operated target scenarios and scoring. Targets should be capable of receiving and transmitting digital data from the range operations center.
- Capability to provide audio and video feedback for immediate AAR.
- Digital connectivity with a virtual training environment to support multi-level training.

1.2.3.2 Combined Arms Collective Training Facility

Existing USARAK facilities are insufficient to support the full spectrum of combat requirements, specifically to transition a combat team from a rural to an urban environment, and back. The proposed CACTF would eliminate this deficiency and provide training for battalion-level (800 Soldiers) combat teams in an urban area. These units need to refine the skills and unit cohesiveness necessary to conduct clearing, breaching, and offensive and defensive operations as they transition to an urban setting. Soldiers must train on a standardized range, as required in TC 25-8, in order to meet their established mission (Chapter 2, Figure 2.c). The design requirements of the CACTF include:

- Location in an area adjacent to the BAX to promote training efficiencies and effectiveness.
- Maneuver training capability to accommodate, at a minimum, a battalion combat team, mounted in combat vehicles, or dismounted.
- Capability to train under realistic scenarios for 800 (or fewer) Soldiers.

- Capability to stage preliminary and concurrent training for a brigade (and below) combat team.
- Capability to incorporate all BOS. BOS include those units and their associated equipment that participate in combat operations, logistically support participating units, and/or conduct additional critical activities such as intelligence gathering and distribution.
- Sufficient area to realistically portray a complex urban setting (range infrastructure, or footprint) (approximately 800 acres).
- SDZ that accommodates SRTA rounds up to approximately 2,300 feet in accordance with DA PAM 385-63, *Range Safety*, and AR 210-21, *Army Ranges and Training Land Programs*.
- Sufficient area for the safe use of SRTA, pyrotechnics, smoke, hand grenades and artillery simulators, and to conduct force-on-force MILES (laser) engagements. Pyrotechnics includes any number of devices such as flash bangs, whistling devices, star cluster signal devices, parachute flares, pen flares, ground flares, smoke hand grenades, hand grenades and artillery simulators.
- Full automation with computer-operated target scenarios and scoring. Targets should be capable of receiving and transmitting digital data with range operations center.
- Capability to provide audio and video feedback for immediate AAR.
- Digital connectivity with a virtual training environment to support multi-level training.

1.2.4 Range Siting Criteria

Range design standards allow for the most comprehensive level of Soldier training in a collective training environment. In addition, these standards provide units with the greatest flexibility in training scenarios, while still meeting current requirements. USARAK independently determined this set of criteria based on the general parameters outlined in TC 25-8. Range siting, operational, environmental and constructability criteria include:

Site Features

- Meet minimum size, shape of the range footprint, and SDZ requirements.
- Allow for adjacent or co-location of ranges.
- Provide a staging area sufficient to support preparatory and concurrent training activities.
- Provide varying degrees of natural overhead protection and concealment (trees/bushes) for maneuvers.
  - Overhead protection – provides safety from both direct and indirect fires.
  - Concealment – provides protection from enemy detection.
- Provide natural topographic variance (e.g., forested upland and wetlands).

Access/Trafficability/Constructability

- Provide favorable terrain for structure construction (low occurrence of wetlands and permafrost).
- Use, as much as possible, existing roads and trails to support construction and tactical equipment, while minimizing the need for construction of new roads and trails. Maximum use of existing roads or hardened trails will efficiently provide for guaranteed year-round ground access for construction of facilities and the routing of power and communications.
- Require minimal vegetation clearing.

- Provide year-round land access for emergency medical evacuation during periods of inclement weather, which often precludes aeromedical evacuation.
- Range must be available for an Army standard training year (year-round – excluding weekends and holidays – 242-day availability).

Employment Pool

- Provide a community, within commuting distance, for range work force, consisting of full and part time employees.

Power/Communications

- Provide, within a reasonable distance, adequate electrical power to conduct range operations.
- Provide, within a reasonable distance, adequate telephone communications to conduct range operations.
- Provide minimum communications interference on Government frequencies.

Unexploded Ordnance

- Ensure low likelihood of encountering unexploded ordnance during construction.

Borrow Material

- Provide adequate gravel sources, within a reasonable distance, for range construction.

Construction Period

- Provide two arctic construction seasons to complete BAX and CACTF range construction, following final approval to proceed with the project.

1.3 SCOPE OF ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

This Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) evaluates the construction and operation of two range projects (BAX and CACTF), and considers the direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of the proposed action and alternatives. It was prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 [42 USC 4321 *et seq*.], the President's Council on Environmental Quality Regulations [40 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Parts 1500-1508], and the Army's implementation regulation for NEPA*, Environmental Analysis of Army Actions* [32 CFR Part 651].

This EIS focuses on the proposed construction and operation of combat training facilities on Alaska Army lands. The scope of this EIS includes potential environmental, cultural, and socioeconomic impacts of the proposed action. The following resource categories are analyzed for the proposed action and alternatives:

- Air Quality
- Soil Resources
- Surface Water
- Groundwater
- Wetlands
- Vegetation
- Wildlife and Fisheries
- Threatened and Endangered Species and Species of Concern
- Fire Management

- Cultural Resources
- Socioeconomics
- Public Access and Recreation
- Subsistence
- Noise
- Human Health and Safety
- Environmental Justice
- Infrastructure

This analysis addresses the environmental impacts of the proposed action and a full range of reasonable alternatives; any adverse environmental effects which cannot be avoided, should the proposed action be implemented, including direct, indirect, long-term, and short-term impacts; and any irreversible or irretrievable commitments of resources. Existing and proposed mitigations are also included in the discussion. All of the evaluated alternatives are located within USARAK boundaries.

1.3.1 Resource Areas Not Included in the Scope of Environmental Analysis

Initial scoping indicated that neither of the proposed alternatives would have any effect on geologic resources. Thus, a discussion of effects on geology will be excluded from this document.

1.4 DECISION TO BE MADE

This document will provide decision-makers with the information necessary to evaluate the environmental, cultural, and socioeconomic impacts of the proposed action and a full range of reasonable alternatives, as required by NEPA. These environmental evaluations will be considered with the other technical, economic, and mission evaluations to produce the best decision, documented through the creation of a Record of Decision (ROD) following a Final EIS. The ROD will explain these decisions. The decision will determine whether to construct and to operate two fully automated collective training facilities – a BAX and a CACTF – at one of the site-location alternatives. The selected alternative will be based on the environmental analyses in this document, as well as other technical, economic, geo-political, and social issues, and the ability to meet objectives of the USARAK mission within the overall Army Vision. Chapter 2 describes the alternatives considered in this analysis. In addition to deciding a particular course of action, the decision-makers will also identify those mitigation measures the Army will undertake as a part of the chosen course of action.

1.5 COOPERATING AGENCY

No Federal or state agencies were identified as formal cooperating agencies in the development of this EIS.

1.6 INTERAGENCY COORDINATION

USARAK notified the state of Alaska of its intent to construct and to operate new combat training facilities in Alaska. The Army has worked directly with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) to define potential impacts on wildlife and fisheries (see Sections 3.2.6 and 4.2.6).

Pursuant to Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, USARAK has consulted with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to determine potential impacts of the proposed action on threatened, endangered, and proposed threatened or endangered (sensitive) species found on Army lands (see Sections 3.3.5 and 4.3.5). There are no listed species on USARAK lands.

The Alaska State Historic Preservation Office has been contacted regarding potential impacts of the proposed action on cultural resources and possible compliance requirements per Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) (see Sections 3.2.7 and 4.2.7).
Since 1980, native and non-native subsistence uses on Federal public lands in Alaska have been regulated by Title VIII of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) (Public Law 96-487). Title VIII addresses the rights of customary and traditional subsistence users by giving "rural" Alaskans, those who depend upon subsistence uses, preference in the take of fish and wildlife on Federal lands (Public Law 96-487, Sec. 801, Sec. 802). The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has determined that the withdrawal of USARAK lands for military purposes does not significantly impact subsistence use (USARAK 1999a) (see Sections 3.3.7 and 4.3.7).

USARAK actively cooperates with the BLM Alaska Fire Service (AFS) in planning and implementing wildfire management measures on Army managed lands. The state of Alaska Division of Forestry was also consulted during planning phases of wildfire management projects and has participated in project site visits (see Sections 3.2.3 and 4.2.3).

In addition, USARAK consults with the BLM regarding timber harvests conducted on military withdrawn lands. The BLM has retained timber rights on certain portions of USARAK lands, and, prior to any tree-clearing activities, is consulted on the use of forest products.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Regulatory Branch will continue to participate in the review process for potential range construction and operation within wetlands and floodplains. USACE will determine which wetlands are "jurisdictional" within the proposed range footprint and will either approve or not approve a Clean Water Act Section 404 permit application.

The Salcha-Delta Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD), a Federal agency, participated in agency scoping meetings regarding potential impacts of the proposed action. The Salcha-Delta SWCD was consulted for development of soil erosion best management practices (BMPs) for construction and operation of the proposed range improvement projects (see Sections 3.2.1 and 4.2.1).

The Tanana Chiefs Conference, Inc. (TCC) was consulted during the scoping period. TCC is a non-profit organization that works as an advocate on behalf of several interior Native Alaska tribes. However, they are not granted the same political relationship with the Federal government as an individual Native Alaska tribe. Their comments have been incorporated into the development of this document.

The city of Delta Junction has been actively involved with USARAK regarding the proposed range improvement projects. City officials met with USARAK representatives on several occasions, provided substantial supporting documentation, and actively participated in scoping efforts relating to the proposed action.

1.7 SCOPING

NEPA defines scoping as "*an early and open process for determining the scope of issues to be addressed and for identifying significant issues related to a proposed action*" (40 CFR 1501.7). These issues are used to develop alternative actions, including mitigation measures, and to evaluate the environmental consequences of proposed actions.

1.7.1 Army Planning

USARAK originally identified the need for a large-size collective training range in 1998. While the first fully automated USARAK ranges were constructed at FRA in 2003, with the Infantry Platoon Battle Course and the Infantry Squad Battle Course to be operational in January 2005, these ranges do not allow for required large-size collective training operations. A DD 1391, submitted in 1998, originally identified the BAX as a Multi-Purpose Range Complex (Light) (MPRC (L)), to provide fully automated and standardized platoon level live-fire exercises. (The DD 1391 is a programming document for military construction.) However, this type of range provided minimal support for larger unit live-fire exercises; and, subsequently, the BAX was designed in 2002 to fulfill the Army's need for company-level mounted and dismounted live-fire exercises. The existing DD 1391 was adjusted to reflect the revised BAX design concept. A separate DD 1391 was submitted for the proposed CACTF in 2001. These training facility requirements were identified prior to Army-wide development of transformation and the SBCT concept.

During the DD 1391 development process, USARAK created an interdisciplinary team to discuss issues and concerns regarding the construction and the operation of training and range facilities, including a BAX and a CACTF. Concurrently, a project planning team was assembled to initiate the analysis required by NEPA. This NEPA planning effort was used to identify topics and areas of potential impact from the proposed action. Participants in this planning included U.S. Army Garrison, Alaska, and USARAK Environmental, Legal, Training, and Public Affairs staff members.

Important issues were identified, discussed and analyzed in a previous Environmental Assessment (EA), and these issues are reflected in the section headings of Chapters 3 and 4 of this EIS. Issues identified by the public, through the scoping process, are listed in Section 1.9, *Issues Identified During the Scoping Process*, and addressed within the appropriate sections in Chapters 3 and 4.

1.7.2 Public Participation

USARAK reviewed its administrative record to identify pertinent issues related to the proposed action. Several documents relevant to public concern, which pre-dated USARAK's Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an EIS for the construction and operation of a BAX and CACTF, are summarized below.

1.7.2.1 USARAK Transformation EIS

An initial public meeting, regarding the transformation of the 172nd Infantry Brigade (Separate) (SIB) into a SBCT, was held at the Delta Junction Community Center in February of 2002. Many individuals attended the transformation scoping meetings to express their concern over the issue of possible new firing ranges at DTA. The primary public issues of concern included increased fire danger, additional noise production, and reduced public access to affected sites. Public testimony and written comments were accepted regarding potential range developments in the Delta Junction area, even though these comments were not applicable to the transformation of the 172nd SIB (the original purpose of the meeting). The transformation to an SBCT is independent of this proposed action. New firing ranges were considered as on-going, independent USARAK activities and were not included as part of the SBCT analysis. These enhanced training ranges will be needed regardless of the configuration of units training within USARAK lands.

1.7.2.2 Draft EA for Range Expansion Projects at Donnelly Training Area, Alaska

The environmental effects associated with the proposed training and range facilities were discussed in a February 2003 Draft EA (*Draft Environmental Assessment for Range Expansion Projects at Donnelly Training Area, Alaska*). USARAK announced public meetings in the *Fairbanks Daily-News Miner* and notices were posted on public bulletin boards in Delta Junction. USARAK solicited comments on the Draft EA at an open house public meeting in Delta Junction on February 6, 2003. Approximately 200 individuals attended the eight-hour open house. A 30-day public comment period on the Draft EA began February 9, 2003 and extended through March 12, 2003.

Delta Junction has demonstrated considerable interest in USARAK's proposed DTA range projects. The public comment process resulted in 131 separate comments on the Draft EA. This high level of interest is also reflected in numerous comments received from local, state, and Federal governmental entities. These public comments have been carefully considered, and many comments have helped USARAK identify and further evaluate potential environmental impacts of the proposed projects. Of the public comments received, the most frequently voiced concerns included wildfire hazard, noise hazard, safety issues, permafrost, groundwater and seasonal flooding issues.

In June 2003, USARAK published the EA for the range expansion projects and a Finding of No Significant Impact. In July 2003, USARAK conducted another series of meetings with concerned citizens of Delta Junction. City Council members and citizens were provided helicopter over-flight of the sites, including those sites of concern to the community. In addition, detailed discussions were held to address any additional community questions or concerns, and to clarify any unresolved issues.

1.7.2.3 City of Delta Junction Litigation

The City of Delta Junction challenged the Army's findings in regard to the EA and initiated litigation in Federal court to halt the action. As a consequence, USARAK agreed to suspend range development activities with regard to the BAX and CACTF, and undertake additional analysis of the potential environmental impacts. To carry out the additional analysis, USARAK elected to prepare this EIS.

1.7.2.4 Public Scoping

An NOI to prepare an EIS for the range construction projects was published in the *Federal Register* on June 1, 2004. A 30-day public scoping comment period regarding the proposed action began June 1, 2004 and extended through July 2, 2004. Public scoping meetings were held in Delta Junction on June 10, 2004 and in Fairbanks on June 16, 2004. USARAK announced the public meetings in the *Fairbanks Daily-News Miner* and notices were posted on public bulletin boards in Delta Junction and on the community website. Approximately 40 individuals attended the open house in Delta Junction, and approximately 15 individuals attended the open house in Fairbanks. Agency scoping meetings were held in Fairbanks and Delta Junction on June 10, 2004 and June 17, 2004, respectively.

Following the EIS public and agency scoping meetings, all relevant comments and concerns were incorporated into subsequent analysis and documentation. Some issues that fell outside the scope of the proposed action were eliminated from further review.

1.8 GOVERNMENT-TO-GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION

American Indian and Alaska Native Federally recognized tribes enjoy a unique political relationship with the Federal government, one that is based on the United States Constitution, treaties, and statutes. Native American tribes have been recognized as "domestic dependent nations" and retain a substantial degree of sovereignty over their own affairs. When Federal actions have the potential to significantly affect tribal interests, consultation with tribal governments must be undertaken on a "Government-to-Government" basis. Tribal consultation must be considered separately from the public participation process mandated by statutes such as NEPA.

In accordance with USARAK responsibilities under NEPA, Executive Order 13175 *Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments,* DoD *American Indian and Alaska Native Policy*, DoD *American Indian and Alaska Native Policy Alaska Implementation Guidance*, and AR 200-4 *Cultural Resources Management,* Government-to-Government consultation regarding this EIS has been initiated with five Alaska Native tribal governments. USARAK has solicited input from these interested tribes in order to evaluate the potential effects of the proposed action on tribal resources, rights and interests. A Native Liaison with USARAK has been designated to work directly with tribal representatives.

1.8.1 Tribal Consultation

Due to the nature of Government-to-Government relationships between the Federal government and Federally recognized tribes, all tribal consultation is independent and separate from other ongoing public coordination and involvement processes (such as those related to NEPA).

In accordance with applicable executive orders and policies, USARAK notified five Federally recognized Alaska Native tribes of the release of the earlier Draft EA and the opportunity for involvement. These tribes included the Dot Lake Village Council, Healy Lake Traditional Council, Northway Traditional Council, Native Village of Tanacross, and Native Village of Tetlin. Tribal representatives were provided copies of the Draft EA (*Draft Environmental Assessment for Range Expansion Projects at Donnelly Training Area, Alaska, 2003*) and invited to attend a meeting focused on tribal concerns, held in Delta Junction in February 2003.

As part of this EIS process, USARAK also extended invitations to an information meeting for the five Federally recognized tribes (mentioned above) on May 5, 2004 in Fairbanks, Alaska. Attendees included tribal representatives from Dot Lake, Healy Lake, Northway, and Tanacross. Concerns and comments voiced at the meeting included the effects of proposed range projects on seasonal moose movement; springtime migratory bird and waterfowl migration; cultural/historical/grave sites located at DTA; and the impacts of large convoys traveling on local highways.

USARAK will continue to solicit tribal comments throughout the EIS process.

1.9 ISSUES IDENTIFIED DURING THE SCOPING PROCESS

Verbal and written comments were received from Alaska Native Tribes, the public, and agencies as part of the issue scoping process for this EIS. The input was used to help identify specific issues of concern and frame the analysis of this EIS. Potential issues were addressed in this EIS if they (1) fell within the scope of the proposed action, (2) suggested different actions or mitigations, or (3) influenced the decision regarding the proposed action.

In addition, the comments received on the initial Draft EA (previously obtained through public meetings in Delta Junction in February and June of 2003) are incorporated into this analysis. Based on tribal, public, and agency comments, and consistent with the goals of NEPA, this EIS concentrates primarily on the major, or controversial, issues of concern, identified during the scoping process. These issues include:

- **Issue 1:** Site criteria, or selection of the site
- **Issue 2:** Permafrost impacts resulting from vegetation removal
- **Issue 3:** Flooding and hydrology, particularly with respect to winter ice overflow (aufeis) at Jarvis Creek
- **Issue 4:** Risk of wildfires
- **Issue 5:** Noise impacts
- **Issue 6:** Safety, as relating to the use of munitions and large convoys traveling on highways
- **Issue 7:** Seasonal moose movement and springtime migratory bird and waterfowl migration
- **Issue 8:** Impacts to cultural/historical/grave sites
- **Issue 9:** Army commitments to mitigations

This document strengthens the analyses and clarifies these issues within the context of appropriate resource categories; thus addressing potentially significant impacts and/or issues of substantial public interest.

1.10 ISSUES OUTSIDE THE SCOPE OF THIS ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

Issues that fell outside the scope of the proposed action were eliminated from further review. Issues were also eliminated if they did not suggest different actions or mitigation, if they did not influence the decision on the proposed action, or if they lacked the potential for significance.

1.11 OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS RELEVANT TO THE ACTION

This EIS uses background information from previously prepared EISs and management plans that address relevant ongoing actions, issues, or baseline data at USARAK. These are either used as background information or are "incorporated by reference," as appropriate. Examples of such NEPA documentation include:

- Final Environmental Impact Statement for Transformation of U.S. Army Alaska, Vol. 1-2, 2004.
- Final Legislative Environmental Impact Statement for Alaska Army Lands Withdrawal Renewal, Vol. 1-2, 1999.
- Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan 2002-2006: Fort Greely and Donnelly Training Area, 2002.
- Integrated Cultural Resources Management Plan 2001-2005: Fort Greely and Fort Wainwright, 2002.
- Working Draft Ecosystem Management Plan, Donnelly Training Area, 2002.
- Working Draft Forest Management Plan, Donnelly Training Area, 2002.
- Final Environmental Impact Statement for National Missile Defense Deployment, Vol. 1-5, July 2000.
- Final Environmental Impact Statement, Pogo Mine Project, Alaska, 2003.

In addition to NEPA, other applicable Federal statutes, regulations, and directives are discussed in the *Final Environmental Impact Statement for Transformation of U.S. Army Alaska, Vol. 2*.

1.12 ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THIS EIS

This document was prepared in accordance with the President's Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations [40 CFR Parts 1500-1508] and Army regulation *Environmental Analysis of Army Actions* [32 CFR Part 651]. Where appropriate, the chapters present separate information for each alternative site. For areas with common information, sections are grouped, as indicated in the section headings. Tables and figures presented in each chapter are numbered by first identifying the corresponding chapter (and, when applicable, section) and are presented in alphabetical order. For example, Figure 3.2.a identifies the first map (a) in Chapter 3, Section 2. This EIS consists of a single volume which contains Chapters 1 through 8, as described below, appendices, and figures. Maps (figures) are located at the end of the document within the Appendix.

Chapter 1: Purpose and Need for Action
This chapter explains the USARAK and Army requirements that establish the underlying purpose and need for the proposed action.

Chapter 2: Description of Proposed Action and Alternatives
This chapter further describes the proposed action, articulates differences between the alternative sites, and discusses the initial "screening" of sites.

Chapter 3: Affected Environment
Chapter 3 presents the environmental settings of the alternative sites.

Chapter 4: Environmental Consequences
This chapter analyzes and presents the environmental impacts on the resources of each alternative site. Potential impacts are described in terms of the activities that produce those impacts, and the significance of those impacts is analyzed, based upon their intensity and context. This chapter also includes an analysis of potential cumulative impacts. Existing and proposed mitigation measures are also discussed. Finally, a comparison of alternatives by environmental consequences for each resource is presented.

Chapter 5: List of Preparers and Contributors
In this chapter, the individuals who prepared this document are identified, along with their qualifications and contributions.

Chapter 6: Bibliography
Sources referenced in this EIS are documented in this chapter.

Chapter 7: Agencies and Individuals Contacted
This chapter identifies local, state, and Federal agencies; tribes; and individuals that were contacted in the preparation of this EIS.

Chapter 8: Distribution List
This chapter identifies all agencies, organizations, and individuals who where sent copies of this EIS.

Glossary
This section defines various terms used in this EIS.

Appendix
The appendix contains materials (often detailed) that were prepared for this EIS or used in the analyses; and which are either (1) relevant to the decision to be made or (2) form the basis for analyses in this document. Figures are also contained in the appendix.